

Blurring the Boundaries: Social Networking & ePortfolio Development

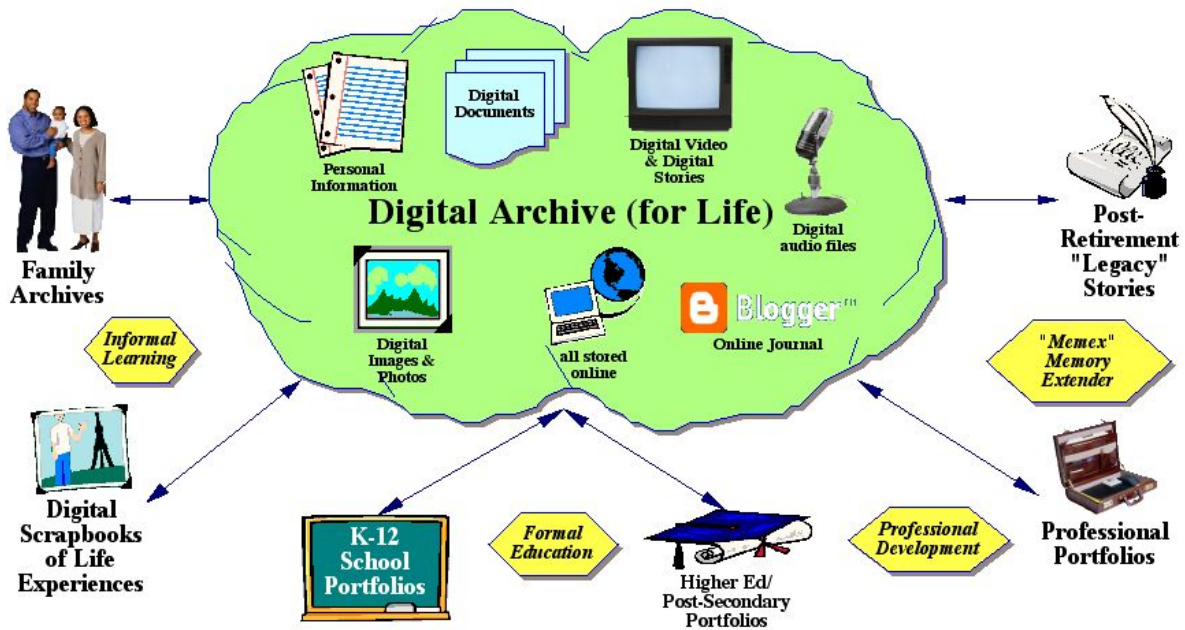
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This document explores my latest research about **Interactive Portfolios**. Within that context, I have been exploring how the boundaries are blurring between electronic portfolio development and social networking, although there are distinct differences. There are two themes that are evident across the lifespan with both ePortfolio development and social networking: Technology and Reflection.

Electronic Portfolios have been with us for almost two decades (since 1991) used primarily in education to store documents and reflect on learning, provide feedback for improvement, and showcase achievements for accountability or employment. As defined in a JISC publication, *Effective Practices with e-portfolios: The e-portfolio is the central and common point for the student experience... It is a **reflection** of the student as a **person** undergoing **continuous personal development**, not just a store of evidence.* (Geoff Rebbeck, e-Learning Coordinator, Thanet College, quoted in JISC, 2008, *Effective Practice with e-Portfolios*)

How is social networking impacting ePortfolio development? (It is having a huge impact on our social and political world!) Social networks have emerged over the last five years, and are used by individuals and groups to store documents and share experiences, showcase accomplishments, communicate and collaborate with friends and family, and, in some cases, facilitate employment searches. My daughter is an avid user of Facebook. Before Christmas, we attended a concert of The Messiah. She took a photograph of the concert hall and posted it to her Facebook account with her iPhone, and she had comments from some of her friends before the program was over. That's immediate reinforcement!

So I'd like you to think: What are the engagement factors that drive the use of social networks and how can we incorporate those factors into ePortfolios? How can we integrate ePortfolios with what we know about social learning and interactivity? The boundaries are blurring between eportfolios and social networks. As we consider the potential of lifelong e-portfolios, will they resemble the structured accountability systems that are currently being implemented in many educational institutions? Or are we beginning to see lifelong interactive portfolios emerging as "mash-ups" in the Web 2.0 cloud, using blogs or wikis or Twitter, Facebook or Ning, Flickr or Picasa or YouTube, etc.?



As shown here, a "digital archive for life" can follow an individual from informal learning in the family (and the popular development of scrapbooks), into formal education and professional development, and serve as a "memory enhancer" as we reach our post-retirement years. I recently published [an article](#) on this topic in the journal, "On the Horizon." On the Horizon | Vol. 17 No. 2, 2009, pp. 142-152, © Emerald Group Publishing Limited, ISSN 1074-8121

Here are some basic concepts: **"ePortfolio and social networking are both process and product"**

Process: A series of events (time and effort) to produce a result - From Old French *proces* ("journey")

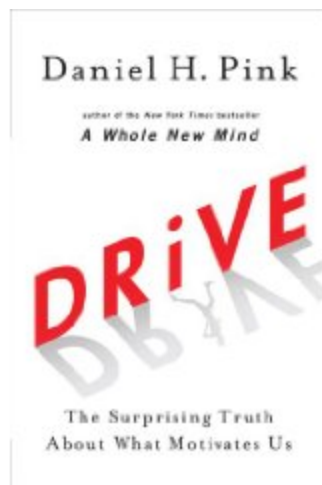
Product: the outcome/results of an activity/process - the Destination

Processes

Portfolio	Social Networking	Technology
Collecting Selecting Reflecting Directing Presenting Feedback	Connecting ("Friending") Listening (Reading) Responding (Commenting) Sharing (linking/tagging)	Archiving Linking/Thinking Digital Storytelling Collaborating Publishing

The traditional portfolio literature identifies the processes shown in the left column. The value-added of technology shows in the right column. Social Networking is added in the middle. First, we have the collection process; with

technology, that leads to creating a digital archive of the work. The second step involves selecting specific pieces or work from the collection to demonstrate a particular outcome, goal or standard. With technology, that process is done by creating a hyperlink to the documents in the archive. Some researchers have found that the process of hyperlinking may lead to higher levels of thinking about learning, or meta-cognition. The process of reflection helps the learner construct meaning from the work they have selected, and technology creates new models of storytelling to help with that meaning-making. Direction is setting goals for the future, and celebration is a formal exhibition before an audience, either real or virtual. Technology creates new opportunities for collaborating and publishing, especially with Web 2.0 tools. Social networks involves connecting or "friending", listening or reading posts, responding or commenting and sharing through linking or tagging.



Drive

There are many similarities between these two processes of portfolio development and social networking; the major differences are often in **extrinsic** vs. **intrinsic** motivation. Dan Pink describes the essential elements of true (intrinsic) motivation in his new book, *Drive*, Pink, Dan (2009) *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*. Riverhead Hardcover the concepts of **autonomy**, **mastery**, and **purpose**. Pink says, "It is devoted to becoming better and better at something that matters. And it connects that quest for excellence to a larger purpose." (p. 80-81) Pink identifies two types of Motivation Behavior: Type X (Extrinsic), fueled by extrinsic rewards or desires. And Type I (Intrinsic), where behavior is self-directed. I am on a campaign to make electronic portfolios a more intrinsically-motivated process.

Autonomy & ePortfolios

Pink quotes Internet scholar Clay Shirky:
...the most successful websites and electronic forums have a certain Type I approach [to motivation] in their DNA. They're designed--often explicitly--to tap

into intrinsic motivation. You can do the same with your online presences if you listen to Shirky and:

- Create an environment that makes people feel good about participating.
- Give users autonomy.
- Keep the system as open as possible.

That's also good advice for developing ePortfolios.

The urge for Self-Direction is basic human need. It is a natural state to be Active and Engaged. E-Portfolio Implementation should adopt the motivating characteristics of *autonomy* found in social networks

- Choice
- Voice
- Sharing and Feedback
- Immediacy

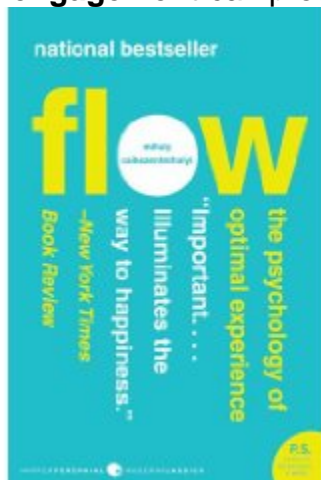
Mastery & ePortfolios

According to a tweet I read from Chris Hamady, "True Mastery is NOT possible without FUN!" (Chris Hamady @chamady Twitter, January 16, 2010) There is an inherent exhilaration in Learning. "It's fun to get better at something!" Why do we play Sports and Games? Is it for Compliance or Personal Mastery? Look to the Open Source movement (Pink discusses the popularity of user-developed Wikipedia vs. the demise of Microsoft's professionally-produced Encarta). Authors and programmers look for Challenge and Improvement, to make a contribution to the greater good.

In their spare time, people gravitate toward activities where they gain mastery. ePortfolio Implementation should adopt the motivating characteristics of *mastery* found in social networks

- **Flow**
- Showcasing Achievements,
- Increased self-awareness and self-understanding

"Only **engagement** can produce **Mastery**." (Pink, 2009, p.111)



Csikszentmihályi popularized the concept of **Flow** Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly (1990). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: Harper and Row. as a feeling of energized focus. According to Wikipedia, *Flow* is a single-minded immersion and represents perhaps the ultimate in harnessing the emotions in the service of performing and learning. In **flow**, the emotions are not just contained and channeled, but positive, energized, and aligned with the task at hand. The hallmark of flow is a feeling of spontaneous joy, even rapture, while performing a task.

According to Will Richardson, “Our job in education is to engage, deepen, and extend a student's passions and interests” (#educon in @WillRich's session) Thomas Friedman, in his book, *The World is Flat, Friedman, T. (2006) The World is Flat: a Brief History of the 21st Century. Farrar, Straus and Giroux* presents this formula:

$$\text{CQ} + \text{PQ} > \text{IQ}$$

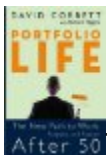
[Curiosity + Passion > Innate Intelligence]

Learners find their **voice** and **passions** through **choice** and **personalization**! A portfolio is a student's story of their own learning. It's positive digital identity development or personal online branding. In my earlier research, some students called their ePortfolios their “Academic MySpace.” We should use ePortfolios to document our MASTERY of skills and content. Showcase our Achievements! Share our Expertise! Support Personal & Professional Development!

Purpose & ePortfolios

Pink's third concept is *Purpose*. All of us want to be part of something larger than ourselves. When people learn, they want to know the relevance of what they are learning. The more people understand the big picture, the more they will be engaged. Here is a good question: Got Purpose? Because Purpose and Passion Co-Exist.

Portfolio Life & Purpose



This book, *Portfolio Life* Corbett, David & Higgins, R. (2006) *Portfolio Life: The New Path to Work, Purpose, and Passion After 50*. Jossey-Bass, is aimed at those of us who are planning for an extended midlife transition, which starts around age 50. It is that time in our lives *after* the empty nest and *before* infirmity. *A Portfolio Life* involves an intentional combination of **passions** and **pursuits**, of **envisioning** new **possibilities**. It is our opportunity to **plan** ahead, **visualize** a new life, to leave a **legacy**. Erikson calls it **Generativity**. We're not facing “retirement” but “rewirement!” To quote Corbett,

“Portfolio responds to a calling that is knit into the fabric of our very being. It is about what our motivations are, what makes us feel most alive. Portfolio development is what our true work should be, for it’s where our deep gifts, and our gladness, meet the needs of the world.” (p. 43)

For those of us lucky enough, it is also the age where we enjoy our grandchildren!

Corbett goes on to say,

A portfolio is, literally, a balanced collection of holdings related to one person, such as financial assets, job responsibilities, artistic works, and accomplishments. It’s something portable, something you carry with you. The portfolio represents the whole. It represents what you have or have done as an expression of who you are.” (p.4)

There is a portfolio way of thinking: Careers have a shelf life; portfolios can be timeless (p.x)... it expands into a mindset that is ageless, in the broader sense of figuring out what really matters in life. (p.5) In the zone between total career mode and total retirement, many want to discover or rediscover their passion... to create a legacy... to turn careers into callings, success into significance... to make a difference... portfolios become an ongoing, ageless framework for self-renewal.

Here are some strategies for a portfolio life:

- Tell the Story of Your Life: Narrative is a powerful tool for self-discovery
- Accomplishments Leave Clues... and increase self-esteem
- Connect with Others -- Network
- Develop Your Goals: Goals Prepare us for Change... Goals Yield Purpose
- It is a time to Revise, Reflect, Rebalance

Do your e-portfolios have Voice? As Maya Angelou said, “When words are infused by the human voice, they come alive.” Do your portfolios represent individual identity, include reflection, and provide an opportunity to make meaning? ePortfolios are essential for 21st Century Literacy.

As I close this presentation, I want remind us that reflection and relationships are the “heart and soul” of a portfolio (and Social Networking) ... NOT the Technology! My final wish to you is that all your electronic portfolios (and social networking) become dynamic celebrations and stories of deep learning across the lifespan.

I welcome your dialogue and conversation about these ideas. Thank you very much!